

## OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

### FY 1999 ANNUAL PROGRAM PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Office of Communications (OC) was established September 30, 1994, by Secretary Memorandum 1020-40, as a successor to the Office of Public Affairs. The mission of OC is to provide leadership, coordination, expertise, and counsel for the development of consistent and timely communications strategies, products, and services that describe USDA initiatives, programs, and functions, so the widest scope of Americans have information that is helpful in their health and economic well-being. OC also provides the Department and USDA agencies with access to high quality, low cost video, radio, teleconferencing, design, and photography services and facilities eliminating the need for each agency to duplicate such services.

More information regarding OC's programs can be found in the OC Strategic Plan and the OC Performance Plan. Only federal employees were involved in the preparation of this report.

As FY 1999 progressed, it became apparent that the original objectives identified in the original FY 1999 Annual Performance Plan were not representative of the full scope of OC's support of USDA's goals. After reviewing the plans of other departments and guidance from OMB, it was determined that a more refined objective and set of means and strategies would be required. As a result, the original objectives and means and strategies were replaced by those given in the FY 1999 and FY 2000 Annual Performance Plan. This report is based on those FY 1999 revised goals and objectives as identified in the FY 1999 and FY 2000 Annual Performance Plan.

The following Table provides summary information of OC's achievement of revised FY 1999 Performance Goals.

OC PERFORMANCE SUMMARY			
Strategic Goal	FY 1999 Performance Goals	Performance	
		Target	Actual
Goal 1: To support the Department in creating a greater awareness among the American public about USDA's major initiatives and services.	All major policy/program decisions, especially on cross-cutting issues, include communications elements, and written communication plans prior to the announcement of every cross-mission area initiative or program priority, and prior to launch of single mission or program priorities and initiatives.	Yes	Yes
	Ensure that all customers and employees of OC are treated fairly and equitably, with dignity and respect.	Yes	Yes
	OC will use all available communications products, technology and techniques to reach employees and all segments of the American public to strengthen public knowledge and understanding of USDA's effective customer services and efficient program delivery to all citizens.	Yes	Yes
	Random Surveys of audiences for selected communications initiatives reveal that intended audience received the material or information distributed.	90%	90%

**GOAL:** To support the Department in creating a full awareness among the American public about USDA's major initiatives and services.

**Objective:** To coordinate communications efforts of the Department and its agencies, thereby supporting the Department in creating a full awareness among the American public about USDA's major initiatives and services.

All major policy/program decisions include communications elements, and written communications plans

**Target:** Yes

**Actual:** Yes

Ensure that all customers and employees of OC are treated fairly and equitably, with dignity and respect

**Target:** Yes

**Actual:** Yes

OC will use all available communications products, technology, and techniques to reach employees and the public

**Target:** Yes

**Actual:** Yes

Random surveys of audiences for selected communications initiatives reveal that intended audience received material or information distributed.

**Target:** 90%

**Actual:** 90%

**1999 Data:** Each OC center prepares a weekly activity report, which is presented to the Director of the Office of Communications. The data in the reports relates to the first three performance measures listed in the table above: 1) the reports identify activities completed or on-going and also identify instances where OC performance goals are not met on an exception reporting basis; 2) the reports identify instances where individuals or organizations have complained that they were not treated fairly or with respect; 3) the reports identify instances where technology was not available to support the mission of OC. With respect to the fourth performance measure, the survey data is based on surveys of customers conducted by the Design and Video Teleconference and Radio centers in FY 1999.

In analyzing this data it must be understood that the OC is a support agency. As such, an evaluation of its performance does not rely on the quantifying of communications products, but rather, does OC have the capacity to respond to whatever may be requested of it so that the communication products created/coordinated by OC support the Secretary and agencies, which are the prime initiators of communications products. It is not logical for a support entity such as OC to propose that it will produce more press releases each year or more video products because the needs of the Department and its agencies to disseminate information to the public are ever changing and dependent on such unpredictable variables as weather, plant and animal disease, and health and safety issues. Regardless of the circumstances, it is OC's responsibility to be able to provide the maximum support possible to the Department whether that means being able to produce 100 press releases or 1,000 press releases. This means that an evaluation of a support agency such as OC can not be focused on a quantitative analysis of what has been produced, but must concentrate on an assessment of their capacity to provide the services required by those entities it serves.

**Analysis of Results:** There were no instances in which OC was unable to provide the necessary

communications support to the Secretary's office; failed to ensure that all persons were treated fairly and equitably; failed to use all available technology; and failed to please at least 90% of the customers polled in select surveys.

The single most informative measure of OC's capacity is determining whether or not there were instances in which OC could not support the Secretary's or agencies' requirements. Such a failure indicates that OC does not have the necessary capacity to meet its goal of supporting the Secretary and the agencies. For this reason, the method used to assess OC's capacity is to identify those instances, as reported in the various centers' weekly reports, where OC or one of its centers failed to support the Secretary or an agency. No such instance occurred in FY 1999.

While OC planned to conduct more extensive surveys of its customers and the public in FY 1999, only limited surveys that could be accomplished with a minimum of expense were conducted.

The FY 1999 annual performance plan contained additional measures for this objective. However, OC analyses determined that these measures did not contribute appreciably to the measurement of program and performance and are discontinued. See Appendix A for an explanation regarding the discontinuation of these measures.

**Current Fiscal Year Performance:** OC is expected to continue its full support of the Secretary and agencies in FY 2000. OC systems successfully transitioned to the year 2000 with no failures. OC has expanded its electronic offerings of information via the Department's Internet Home Page by the addition of video and audio streaming, and a redesign of the Home Page to permit more efficient access to information.

**Program Evaluations:** None conducted in FY 1999.

**OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS****DISCONTINUED PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

**Goal 1:** To support the Department in creating a greater awareness among the American public about USDA's major initiatives and services.

**Objective:** All major policy/program decisions, especially on cross-cutting issues, include communications elements, and written communication plans prior to the announcement of every cross-mission-area initiative or program priority, and prior to launch of single mission or program priorities and initiatives.

**Discontinued Performance Measures**

Communications plans describe each mission's and/or agency's role.

All OC units and mission/agency communications staffs are involved in carrying out communications plans.

**Explanation:** Both of these indicators were dropped from the FY 2000 annual performance plan because it was determined that they were both descriptive rather than evaluative and they did not contribute appreciably to the measurement of program performance.